Waltham Police Department

SUDDEN DEATH INVESTIGATIONS CHAPTER 93

General Order Number: GO-01 2009
Effective Date: 01/2009

POLICY:

It shall be the policy of the Waltham Police Department to make all appropriate notifications promptly and to conduct preliminary investigations in a thorough and professional manner when the police have knowledge that a person has died.

PROCEDURES:

1. NOTIFICATION OF MEDICAL EXAMINER: The Medical Examiner shall be notified when a death occurs by any of the following circumstances:

- By violence;
- By the action of chemical, thermal, or electrical agents;
- Following abortion;
- From diseases, which result from occupational injury or infection;
- Suddenly when not disabled by recognizable disease;
- From malnutrition;
- From sexual abuse;
- A child who is determined to be physically dependent upon an addictive drug at birth;
- When any person is found dead.
- Notify DA in nursing home death or a death of someone on hospice.

A. NOTIFICATION: Such notification shall include, but is not limited to, the known facts concerning the time, manner, circumstances, and cause of such death.
B. SUDDEN DEATH FORM, FORM #93-1: The Waltham Police Department "Sudden Death" Form shall be used in all such cases.

2. PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATIONS OF SUDDEN DEATHS:

A. PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION: The preliminary investigating officer(s) at the scene of any death which is unattended by a physician shall document all facts relevant to appearance, condition, and position of the body, and all facts as to the cause and circumstances of death. The officer shall contact the Commanding Officer Platoon

on Duty from the scene and provide the information required on the Sudden Death Form.

B. The Commanding Officer - Platoon on Duty shall assign a Patrol Supervisor to the scene, and shall make notification according to the Waltham Police Operations Manual. The Commanding Officer - Platoon on Duty shall also notify the Investigation Division, and the State Police Unit when the Medical Examiner takes jurisdiction or in situations where the death is either:

1. Accidental
2. Unnatural
3. Violent
4. Suspicious

CPAC Business Hours: (781) 897-6600
CPAC After Hours: (617) 740-7536 or MSP HQ (508) 820-2121
Medical Examiner: 24 Hours: (617) 267-6767 FAX: (617) 266-6763

C. In situations where the death is accidental, unnatural, violent, or suspicious, the Commanding Officer - Platoon on Duty shall also, in addition to the foregoing notifications, notify:

1. IN CASES OF INDUSTRIAL FATALITIES - OSHA

2. IN CASES OF MOTOR VEHICLE FATALITIES - REGISTRY OF MOTOR VEHICLES - AND THE DISTRICT ATTORNEYS OFFICE.

Upon responding to the scene of a death as outlined in above Section C, the Patrol Supervisor shall ensure that the body is not moved and the scene is not disturbed, until the medical examiner or the representative of the district attorney's office either arrives at the scene or gives directions as to what shall be done at the scene and for the removal of the body.

CI. When the Commanding Officer - Platoon on Duty is unable to contact the medical examiner, he shall notify the Chief Medical Examiner and seek telephone removal authority as above. If neither the medical examiner nor the headquarters office can be contacted, the Officer in Charge - Platoon on Duty or the representative of the district attorney may authorize transfer of the body to the regional medical examiner's office or to a funeral home. Copies of all documents, including names and addresses of all known witnesses, will be sent to the medical examiner.
In situations where the body is transferred to a funeral home, the funeral home director shall be notified of the possibility of an autopsy.

CII. In situations where the Medical Examiner is unable to respond, the assigned Patrol

Supervisor shall, per Mass. Gen. Law, Chap. 38, Sec. 6:

1. Ensure that all facts are documented relevant to appearance, condition, and position of the body, and every fact and circumstance tending to show the cause and circumstances of death;

2. Seek telephone authority for removal of the body from the Medical Examiner or the Chief Medical Examiner;

3. Notify next of kin, if known, or cause them to be notified, that this department is taking jurisdiction of the body and of the next location to which the deceased person will be taken.

3. NOTIFICATION TO FAMILIES REGARDING DEATH OR EMERGENCIES:

A. During the course of duty, officers are required to make notifications of death and emergency situations to family members. Officers making these notifications must be aware of the impact these notifications have on family members.

B. Officers may use the services of clergy, a relative, or close family friend. The help of these individuals may lessen the impact such news may have on the part of the recipient. Officers should convey these notifications in a prompt, compassionate and considerate manner, and be prepared to render appropriate assistance such as transporting family members to the hospital.

C. There will be times that other agencies will request the services of our department to make death/emergency notifications. All such notifications/requests made by other agencies will be acted upon promptly and in a professional manner. Notifications should be made in person and not over the telephone whenever possible. If the victim is still alive and in the hospital, the family should be told the extent of the injuries or emergency situation. The family should be taken to any local hospital upon request. If the hospital is not local, officers should be prepared to provide necessary assistance and information.